

Facsimile of eNewsletter sent to our members on 26 November 2020

All these articles may be found on the News page of our website



## e-Newsletter November 2020



Welcome to our latest eNewsletter. This is our third edition since the March lockdown and feedback is that it has been well received. It is said that out of adversity comes opportunity and that has certainly been the case with our eNewsletters. Not only have we developed a new communications channel but we have also discovered some extra contributors amongst our members. A special thank you to them for stepping forward.

In this edition we have our regular update from the Chairman, Gordon Jackson, plus an article about our involvement in walking festivals. However, this time we have taken a leaf out of our paper-based newsletters and developed several articles around a central theme - **The Victorians in Surrey**.

The Victorian era had a massive impact on Surrey and the Surrey Hills, the legacy of which can be seen widely today. From gardening to the arts and from leisure to transport, the 19<sup>th</sup> century truly can be said to have been when Britain discovered Surrey. But whilst visitors and incomers revelled in the beauty of the countryside, many of those who made up the rural labour force were not having it so good. We hope you will enjoy reading the articles on these topics and, hopefully, they will encourage you to head out to learn more about our wonderful county.

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## Chairman's Views

The rollercoaster continues! In our last newsletter I wrote about how we were just beginning to start events again as the last lockdown eased. Since then we have managed to put on over 20 events. Although the rules for walks would have allowed us to have as many as thirty in a group we felt happier conducting events in a number of groups of six, each with their own group leader. This format worked really well, and I would like to extend a particular thank you to all those volunteers who helped overcome the various additional challenges that we had to face. There is no doubt that all our members appreciated the opportunity to join our events and almost everything we put on was fully booked! I was most impressed that, despite the limitations, we had a varied programme with visits to a number of gardens, a sculpture park and of course a selection of walks for all levels of ability. You can read more on this topic in the next article.

In the last few weeks, we have of course been in lockdown again and yet more events have had to be postponed, but it has actually been quite a busy time, nonetheless.

The day before the new restrictions, I was delighted to attend the opening of Optohedron (see below), the new Inspiring Views sculptural bench by Will Nash just above Newlands Corner.



The Society has been involved in supporting this fabulous Surrey Hills Arts project. The sculpture is wonderful, and it now sits in a stunning setting.

The strength of the Inspiring Views project is that it is not only about excellent art, but the accompanying landscape improvement and conservation work provides a lasting benefit to the Surrey Hills. The Surrey Hills Trust Fund is committed to ensuring that the necessary maintenance of all the Inspiring Views locations is carried out on a regular basis.

There are two further benches being planned. Fundraising for the new artwork, Radius by James Tunnard will connect the North Downs Way National Trail to a truly inspirational view at Denbies Hillside.

For a donation of £80 supporters can have their own personalised batten engraved. You can find

more information [here](#). Plans for the development of the second bench are currently in an early stage of development.

There is one other important feature of Radius. I informed members in a recent MailChimp that Anthony Wakefield, the former sponsor of our newsletter, died during the summer. In discussion with Anthony's family, the Society has agreed to sponsor the planting of an oak tree, near to Radius, in his memory. Anthony specifically requested, shortly before he died, that a tree be planted. We all feel that he would have thoroughly approved of this location, especially as he was always a great champion of the arts and sculpture in particular. I'm sure you will all wish to join me in sending our deepest sympathy to Anthony's family.





You will be aware that we would normally have held our AGM in October / November. Due to the current pandemic, the trustees have decided to delay the Society's formal AGM until early next year. However, although we can't meet in person, we have decided to hold a Zoom event. So now we are planning for the Society's own catch up on Saturday 28th November.

Your Events Committee is working to produce a full diary of events as soon as we are allowed to do so and I hope that we may even be able to run a couple of outdoor events in December, although this is obviously dependant on Covid restrictions. In the meantime if your thoughts are turning to Christmas Shopping may I take this opportunity to remind you that a perfect gift is a Society Membership pack which you can order online [here](#).

AND FINALLY Surrey Hills Enterprises is inviting people in Surrey to pledge their support to buy at least 1 in every 5 of their Christmas purchases from a Surrey Hills business and help the local economy and environmental sustainability.

Find out more [here](#) and be inspired by the outstanding local products and gift experiences, all with the Trade Mark Surrey Hills accreditation.

Gordon Jackson

## The Society, Events and Walking Festivals

Those of you who check out the Events programme of the Society will have seen that in September we had a lot going on. Unlike many organisations, we were able to get back up and running but Covid constraints meant that we needed to focus on outdoor activities. That month we managed to put on four events - which is typical of a monthly offering. Dunsborough's Dahlias, Vann House Gardens and Caxton House Gardens were all private viewings which added something really special to the visits - and have led to feedback that attendees want to go back in due course. We also altered our first Sunday of the month "walk" to become a guided exploration of the various sites which make up the Watts Gallery complex.



But the Society is about much more than just visits for members. Every year, your Society has been a sponsor of Guildford Walking Festival (Walkfest) - and indeed, it's Chairman plus a number of the walk leaders are active SHS volunteers.

In previous years, the format of Walkfest has been fairly relaxed with advance booking desirable but with the ability for extra folk to turn up on the day.

This year, the organisation had to be far more rigorous with advance booking being compulsory and with sufficient walk leaders available to allow for splitting attendees into compliant sized groups.

The Society already has an effective booking system in place for the regular events programme so it was logical for us to make use of it to book these extra events which were being hosted by the Society. There were eleven such walks during the month so the programme on our website did look a bit busy and skewed towards walking events. However, be assured, this does not mean that SHS is intending to mutate into an organisation focused on walks.

To put this into perspective, amongst the key reasons for the existence of the Society are “to promote the area to the public” and “encourage people to explore and learn about the special qualities and distinctiveness of the area”. Walkfest ticks both those boxes. In addition, those of you who attended the 2019 Surrey Hills Symposium will have heard about the importance of getting folk out into ‘green spaces’, increasing exercise and socially interacting. Again, this walking festival helps us to support these important aims.

Involvement in Walkfest also has other benefits to the Society. In total, just under half the participants in the SHS hosted walks were members of the Society so we were providing an extra service to them. The balance of the walkers were obviously people who wanted to get out and learn more about the area and, as such, were potential members. Indeed, we gained a number of new members as a direct result of specific walks and, probably, there will be a ripple effect with extra memberships arising over the coming months.



Several of the walks were to places in, or around, Guildford borough that your Events team knew little about.

Thus, an added benefit of our involvement has been to discover new locations and features on which to base future SHS visits or walks. We also met fascinating people who have their own specialist knowledge and can add to the richness of our events.

The one thing that we have all learned during our SHS activities is that there always seems to be somewhere new or something to discover whenever we get involved in initiatives across the county.

**Ken Bare**





## Famous Surrey Victorians

Thinking about the great Victorians with links to the Surrey Hills, the first names that probably come to mind are those related to the Arts & Crafts movement. **Edwin Lutyens** and **Gertrude Jekyll** probably topping the list being respectively, the “go to” architect and landscape gardener of the day.



Close to the top is possibly **Thomas Cubitt** (photo left), renowned master builder, whose connection includes Denbies' estate which he designed and subsequently purchased in 1851. And, of course, **Mrs Isabella Beeton** who grew up in Epsom and was one of the first celebrity chefs!

However, there are many other prominent Victorians, with links to the area: including writers, artists, social reformers and scientists.

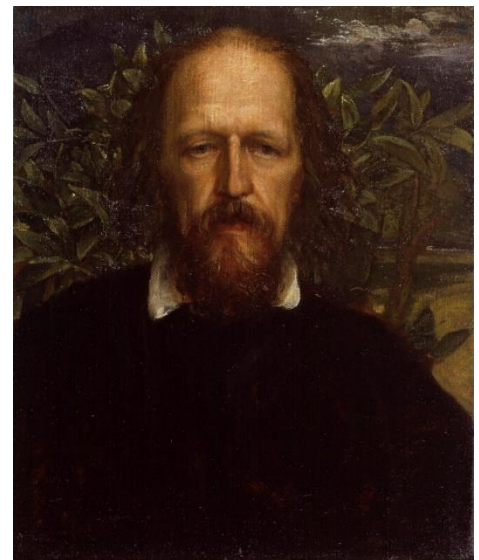
Several major literary figures have been inspired by the Surrey Hills including **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** who is said to have written the 'Hound of the Baskervilles' at his home Undershaw in Hindhead. **Charles Dickens** stayed at The White Horse in Dorking where it is believed he wrote part of 'The Pickwick Papers' and **Alfred Lord Tennyson** perhaps wrote some of his best poetry whilst living in Haslemere.

**HG Wells** was certainly inspired by the area when living in Woking. 'The War of the Worlds' covers a whole host of Surrey locations, whilst his less well known 1895 novel 'The Wheels of Chance' covers a cycling holiday which references various Surrey Hills towns including Haslemere, Godalming and Guildford. Even **Lewis Carroll**, usually associated with Oxford, had links to the area having moved his family to Guildford and subsequently being buried there.

Less than five miles away in the village of Compton are the graves of the renowned Huxley family, along with the stunning Watts Chapel created by designer and artist **Mary Watts**. Also in the village is the Watts Gallery, dedicated to the work of her husband **George Watts**, considered by many to be the greatest Victorian painter (picture of Tennyson by G F Watts, shown right).

Not so well known is that the Victorian actress **Dame Alice Ellen Terry** was briefly married to Watts when she was just sixteen.

Another interesting building with links to prominent families is Leith Hill Place, **Ralph Vaughan Williams'** home, before he left it to the National Trust (co-founded by another Surrey Hills Victorian, lawyer and conservationist **Sir Robert Hunter** who lived in Haslemere.) In the Victorian era Leith Hill Place was home to **Josiah Wedgwood III** and his wife Caroline Darwin. A frequent visitor was **Charles Darwin**, the renowned naturalist, who conducted experiments within the grounds.



The Victorian era saw enormous economic and social change followed by social reform. One such reformer was **William Cobbett**, who died just before Victoria came to the throne, but whose mission had a long-term impact on rural Surrey. After the 1832 Reform Act women's suffrage also gained ground and Surrey was home to several leading activists. They included **Dorothy Hunter**, one of the most significant female speakers of her day, and **Augusta Spottiswoode**, one of several Surrey women to sign the first petition for women's suffrage.



Women were also gaining ground in the world of science. **Ada Lovelace**, daughter of Lord Byron and a true visionary, is recognised as the world's first computer scientist. After her marriage to the Earl of Lovelace in 1835 she moved to East Horsley and later to Horsley Towers. She sadly died aged just 37.

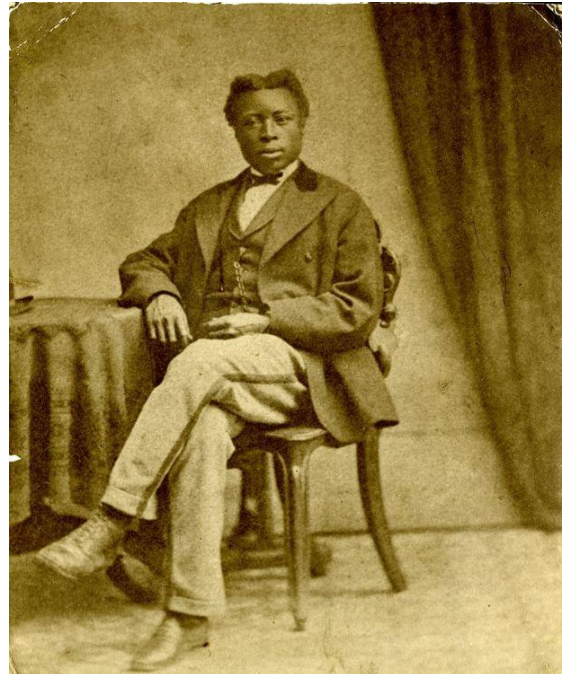
And finally, another interesting character, well worth a mention at this time is **John Springfield**, one of several people of colour to have contributed to Surrey's culture.

He was born to a Zanzibar chief, captured by Portuguese sailors aged just nine, before ultimately being rescued by Dr David Livingstone. He then spent time in America before settling in Guildford where he is said to have integrated into the community working as a cobbler and preaching against slavery.

Susie Turner

### Acknowledgements

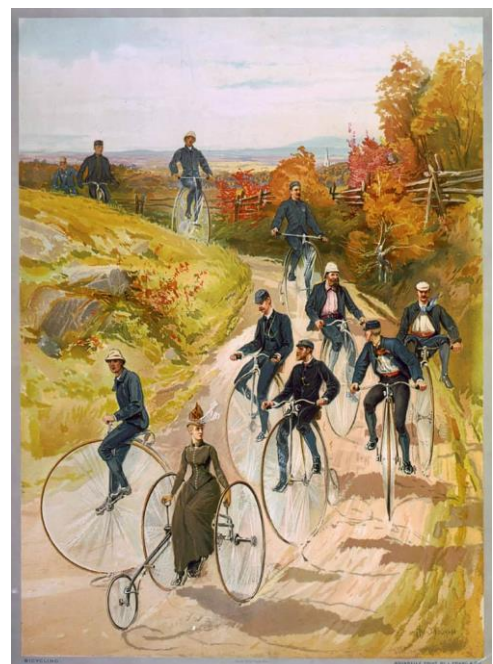
- Alfred Tennyson, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Tennyson by George Frederic Watts, National Portrait Gallery NP1015, link [here](#)
- John Springfield sepia photo, courtesy of Surrey History Centre



## Cycling in Victorian Surrey

2012 saw a new era for cycling in the Surrey Hills. Inspired partly by the desire to emulate the feats of the athletes who took part in the Olympic road races, and partly by the beautiful countryside that the aerial television shots revealed on the route, literally thousands of enthusiastic amateurs have flocked to the area ever since. Box Hill is the most popular climb in the World and as of last year over 100,000 enthusiasts had attempted the official segment of the climb more than 770,000 times between them.

But the history of cycling in Surrey goes much further back. The first true bicycle, known as the Velocipede, was invented in 1860 by two Frenchmen, Ernest Michaux and Pierre Lallement. However, it had no brakes and resulted in many treacherous "headers". The more comfortable, but still dangerous, Penny Farthing was developed in 1870 and the popularity of cycling blossomed alongside the development of more and more sophisticated machines throughout the last 30 years of Queen Victoria's reign.





By virtue of its Macadam surface the old Portsmouth Road, later to become the A3, was a popular route out of London. Ripley was a convenient distance and was described by Lord Bury in 1887 as “the Mecca of good cyclists”.

One has to admire the courage and endurance of the young men, who took their lives in their hands riding their early primitive cycling machines such a long distance.



It is no small wonder that Mrs Harriet Dibble and her two daughters of the Anchor Hotel in Ripley ran a highly successful business from the mid 1870's providing refreshments and accommodation to these early pioneers.

Visitors' books were kept and those from 1881 to 1895 still survive. Some of the books contain over 6,000 entries per year and H G Wells, who was an enthusiastic cyclist, signed one in 1887.

Of course, there were other routes and Dorking was also a major hub. There is a lovely story about one of the first recorded rides in 1875 by a London Draper, Stanley Boorer. He apparently terrified the local housemaids by cycling his “boneshaker” from Denbies to Dorking in the dark with glow worms attached to his hat! Soon the cycles became commonplace and Londoners would pedal down through Morden and Merton, and out via Box Hill to Dorking. By the 1890s the affordable price of a safety cycle, with tyres and a chain, meant the sport grew hugely popular. Dorking Cycling Club was formed in 1887 and had 100 members by 1892.

At first cycling was mostly the domain of young men. Riding in the long heavy Victorian skirts was extremely difficult and dangerous for women, but this did not deter them for long. Although some people were morally outraged, the Rational Dress Society gained much support, promoting knickerbocker suits for ease of movement. In 1898, Richard Cook of the White Horse in Dorking wrote in the Daily Mail that he would not admit women in “rational dress” to his coffee room. He was not alone, but progress could not be held back and soon many were hailing cycling as a great emancipation for women that was nothing short of a “social revolution”.



Several hundred members of cycling clubs from all over the South East came together for a fortnight of competition and excursions in Dorking in the 1890's, camping at Poultry farm, south of St. Paul's School. The camps were open to the public and in August 1896 over 6,000 entrance fees were taken. Entertainments included dancing, singing and sports, plus a burlesque sports day with 3-legged races and a tug-of-war. The annual highlight was a torchlight procession through the town with 200-300 cyclists in fancy dress led by a band.

As cycling developed as a sport then so did those that supported it. In 1895, the 24 year old John Dennis opened his “little cycle shop”, United Athletic Stores, near Guildford Bridge. Shortly afterwards he was joined in the business by his younger brother, Raymond. Three years later and sensing the advent of self-powered transport, they launched their own motorised tricycle and by

1901 they were producing cars. Today, Alexander Dennis Limited is a global leader in the design and manufacture of double deck buses and is also the UK's largest bus and coach manufacturer.

When you next see a group of lycra-clad enthusiasts spinning through the Surrey Hills, spare a thought for those that went before them. A passion for the outdoors and the inspirational beauty of our special landscape is a common thread that draws them together over a span of 150 years.

Gordon Jackson

### *Acknowledgements*

This article is just a short summary of a wealth of facts and stories that survive from the period. We would like to acknowledge the excellent websites of [The Surrey History Centre](#), [The Send and Ripley History Society](#) and [Dorking Museum](#) that have helped inform this article.

- Cyclists outside the Anchor at Ripley, courtesy of Send & Ripley History Society
- Lady cyclists in Dorking, courtesy of Dorking Museum

## Victorian Artists of Surrey

It is probably undisputed that George Fredrick Watts OM RA (1817 - 1904) was the most influential Victorian artist of, not only the Surrey Hills, but the entire UK. Often referred to as England's "Michelangelo", he was the celebrity painter of his day, even painting royalty.

His legacy for the Surrey Hills is the home and studio he created with his wife Mary Watts (1849-1938), towards the end of his life. Today it is the highly regarded and award winning Watts Gallery at Compton. However, for me, it is the work of his wife, artist Mary, who has had an iconic influence on the Surrey Hills. She created Watts Cemetery Chapel, an unusual terracotta structure, with the help of local residents whom she was training up in craft skills to break the cycle of labouring and domestic service whilst keeping them employed. She also founded the Compton Potters' Arts Guild that went on to sell at Liberties in London and which continued right up until 1956.

Both Mary and GF Watts were influential members of the Arts and Crafts Movement which was created as a reaction to the industrial revolution and the age of the machine. They championed the traditional crafts and, along with architects like Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll, helped make the Surrey Hills an iconic area for the Arts and Crafts Movement.



Another, less well known gallery, is the Sidney Sime Gallery in Worplesdon - just outside Guildford (and the venue for a recent SHS visit, shown left). This was the home of Sidney Sime (1865 - 1941), an artist best known for his fantastic and satirical artwork, especially his illustrations for Irish author Lord Dunsany



No list of famous Surrey artists would be complete without mentioning Helen Allingham (1848 - 1926), who lived in Haslemere. Her watercolours of idyllic rural life scenes of the Surrey Hills can be found in galleries around the world (A cottage with Sunflowers at Peaslake, shown right).

She studied at the Royal Academy School (which later became the Royal College of Art). Although women could not gain the same recognition as men at the time, Helen Allingham was one woman who made a real impact in the age of the Victorians, with artists like Van Gogh being influenced by her. The Helen Allingham Society was formed in 2000 to celebrate her beautiful art and unique talent.



Although living before the Victorian era, artist John Hassell took a huge interest in Surrey landscapes and architecture. His son, Edward (d.1852) also became a popular early Victorian artist and was particularly fascinated by the interiors of churches. His work has been a useful reference when looking to restore many Surrey church buildings. Over 500 of John and Edward's works appear amongst 2,000 prints, watercolours and drawings by Surrey artists collected by Robert Barclay and used to illustrate his copy of "Mannings and Bray's History and Antiquities of Surrey".



Originally from Scotland, Arthur Melville (1855 - 1904) lived in Redlands, Witley for most of his adult life. He is mainly known for his orientalist subjects. One painting is in the V&A Museum in London and many are in Scottish galleries and museums (image of A Cabbage Garden shown left).

He was not particularly popular in his own lifetime but it is said that he influenced the "Glasgow Boys". Today he is a highly collectable artist. His ashes are interred at Brookwood cemetery in Woking.

Another notable Surrey landscape artist was Edward Henry Holder (1847 - 1922) who lived at Reigate and Redhill during his working life. His painting "October in Surrey: Children Nutting" is in the V&A Museum in London. Originally from Scarborough in Yorkshire, he travelled extensively in Europe and as far away as South Africa.

Finally, no list of Victorian artists would be complete without William Henry Allen (1863 - 1943). He was long - time inspirational head of Farnham School of Art and mentor to other creative people, including the architect Harold Falkner.

Allen was known mainly for his watercolours of vanishing English countryside, portraiture and the wonderful use of colour. The Allen Gallery may be over the border in Alton, where his mother and brother lived, but he lived and worked in Farnham. Farnham's creative links remain with the School of Art becoming, in modern times, the extremely successful University of Creative Arts.

**Christine Howard**

## Acknowledgements

- A Cottage With Sunflowers At Peaslake by Helen Allingham, , Public domain, via [Wikimedia Commons](#)
- A Cabbage Garden by Arthur Melville, 1877, Painting in National Gallery of Scotland. [Image](#) courtesy of Stephen C Dickson, Creative Commons via Wikimedia Commons



## How the Victorians Influenced our Local Gardens

Prior to the Victorian age Surrey was a little known county but with the coming of the railways it opened up as people were able to come out from London with their bicycles and enjoy the countryside. It was then that gardening became extremely popular. The wealthy had the space and money to create large, lavish landscapes and the middle class were also able to create beautiful gardens many of which are to be found in Surrey. Let's now look more closely at the characteristics of Victorian garden style.

Flower beds were formal with showy plants and flowers grown along walkways or in large raised beds. Victorians preferred big, bold plants like lilies, dahlias, ferns and ornamental grasses. Traditional cottage garden flowers such as hollyhocks, snapdragons and sunflowers were considered outdated.

Collecting plants imported from all over the world became a popular hobby and thus necessitated the construction of glasshouses to house these tropical plants during winter. They were situated in the walled kitchen garden which played an important part in Victorian lives. It was the job of the head gardener to prepare displays of exotic fruits for the master of the house as well as elaborate floral arrangements for the table. The mid 19th century garden at Titsey Place (shown right), home of the Gresham family for many years, contains a number of glasshouses now fully restored.



Lawns were an essential element of Victorian garden style, designed to frame a lovely house and also for socialising and lawn games. A huge variety of shrubs and trees, both evergreen and deciduous, were used for planting along property lines or in mixed hedges.

The Victorians loved ornamentation, in particular, topiary, sundials on pedestals, cast iron ornaments, statues, pools and fountains, urns filled with flowers and foliage in covered trellises - anything flamboyant.

However, although all these gardens helped to popularise gardens and gardening in Victorian England, because of their romantic image, they do not depict the widespread poverty that was often found in rural areas. Nevertheless the paintings of the Victorian "cottage artist" Helen Allingham showing an abundance of flowers in cottage gardens, and portraying country life at that time, were much sought after by the Victorians.



Most of the gardens from this period were designed in an earlier age but were remodelled throughout the 19th century. Here are some examples:-



**Claremont:** extensive pleasure gardens and park surrounding a country mansion originally designed by Sir John Vanbrugh but remodelled in the early 19th century. Highlights are a superb serpentine lake, an amphitheatre and a belvedere (a raised gallery or summer house for viewing).

**Wotton House:** home of John Evelyn's family for many years, but now a hotel, was the first Italian garden in this country with extensive alterations in early to mid 19th century. Thirteen acres of eccentric formal gardens containing extravagant features such as temples, grottoes, waterfalls and various follies.



**Munstead Wood:** late 19th century garden, one of many created by Gertrude Jekyll, probably the most famous of all the Arts & Crafts gardeners, full of colourful roses, pergolas and lily ponds. She is especially known for her ability to showcase plants to the best of their advantage by colour, texture and shape according to the season.

Thus the formal style that we associate with the Victorians, in both their elaborate and richly adorned houses and dress and in their love of brightly coloured flowers, was reflected in gardens such as these. The introduction of plants from every continent and climate all helped to increase their knowledge of plant breeding and, together with meticulous garden design, they were able to create the gardens which we still see and admire today.

**Virginia Turner**



## Surrey's Canals and Railways

Prior to Victorian times, waterways and canals had become the preferred method of moving bulk and trade cargoes around the country. The Basingstoke Canal, River Wey Navigations and the Wey & Arun Junction Canal (WAJC) were all busy routes and, indeed, the WAJC reached its peak in 1839 when the canal carried 23,000 tons of goods around Surrey and beyond. However, the 19th century was the era of massive railway growth and, by about 1870 two of the three were effectively dead whilst the River Wey Navigations only limped on into the beginning of the 1900s.

It seems strange to realise that when Victoria became queen in 1837 there were no steam powered railways in Surrey - although the horse-drawn Surrey Iron Railway between Wandsworth, Croydon and Mitcham had opened at the beginning of the century and lasted until 1838.



The basic cause of the demise of the canals was that railways could move larger quantities of material, could travel faster and were not restricted to the availability of water sources. In addition, the promoters of routes soon realised that passenger traffic could be a profitable addition to freight revenues so that it was not long before lines were being created primarily for the carriage of people.

Amongst the first lines to actually open for traffic through Surrey (September 1841) was the London & Brighton Railway. The main trade for this route was the carriage of passengers to Brighton which had become the most popular seaside resort in Britain, with over 2,000 people a week visiting the town.

In May 1845 the first steam train left Guildford for Woking. It only took 12 minutes which is not much longer than the current journey time! Guildford to London took a bit longer but was still less than two hours. Then, in 1849 a link to Farnham was established from Guildford and this was extended in 1852 to become the Alton line. These areas were barley growing districts and a heavy traffic of ale (145,000 barrels) was sent to London. Stone quarries near Alton gave rise to stone being transported widely by rail. Guildford became more important, growing into a railway junction and part of an ambitious scheme to reach the Channel ports from the Midlands and the West.

Many of the companies opening new railway lines across the county and beyond were working independently and there was no agreed gauge for the tracks. In order to create a useful network, they all needed to be standardised and consequently the "Regulation of Gauge Act" was made law in July 1854 to rectify an anomaly of different gauges along the lines.

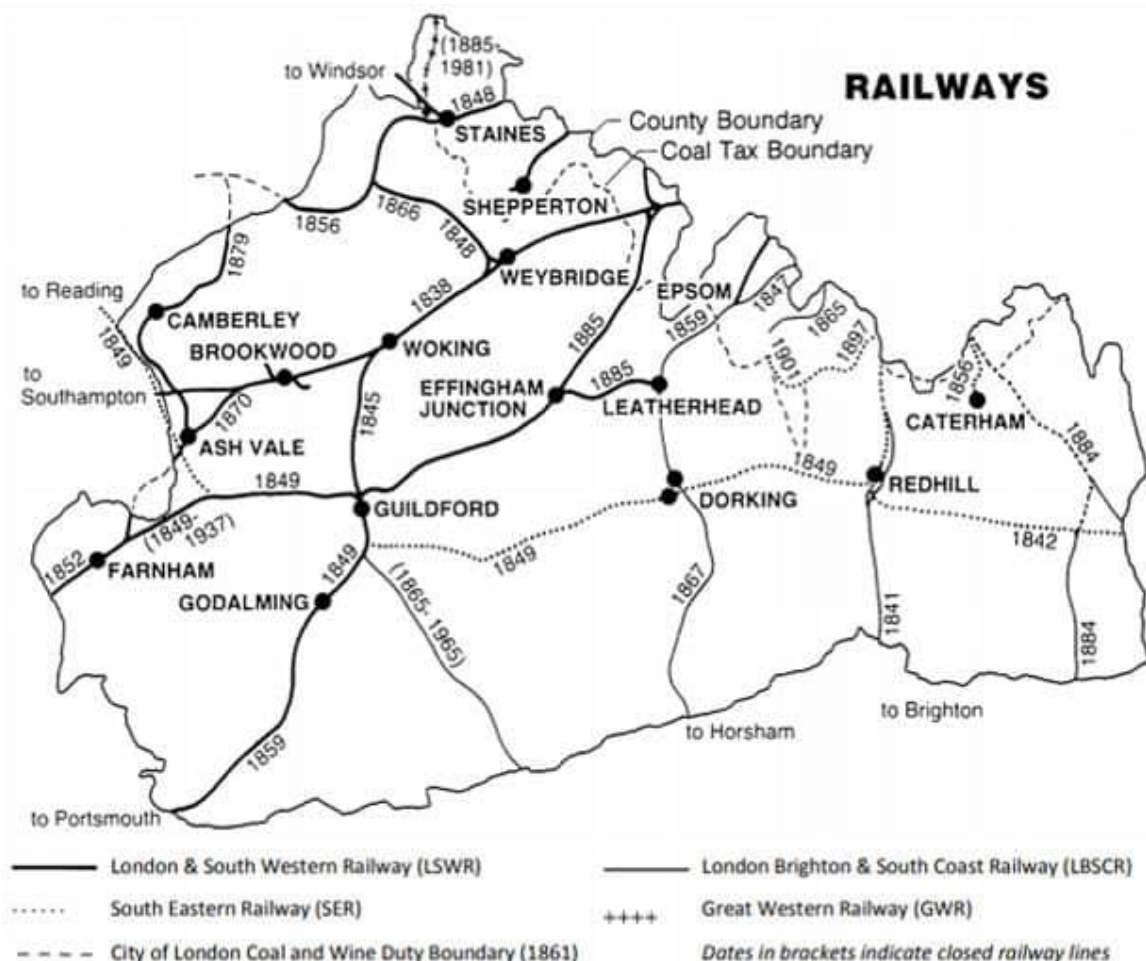


Another line into Surrey was created by the London Necropolis Company. This company purchased land at Brookwood, near Woking, and created a large cemetery to cater for the needs of London - whose local cemeteries were becoming full.

Brookwood station opened in June 1864 and served special trains consisting of normal coaches for the mourners and special hearse vans for the coffins. The railway company did

well, gaining not only from the journey to the cemetery, but also from subsequent visits by relatives.





The public soon realised that railways provided new ways for them to enjoy their leisure hours with trips to places which had previously been less accessible. Hampton Court was already a popular destination and a branch line from Woking was created for this trade. There was opposition but it was considered a public necessity to provide recreation to the poorer classes. By 1865 as many as 13 of the 47 main line departures from Waterloo were for Hampton Court. In 1861 a line to Richmond and Shepperton had been built so that London workers could escape from the overcrowded and unhealthy portion of the city into the healthier localities. Then in 1867 the station at Boxhill and Westhumble was built and the leisure trade to the area blossomed.

Victorian Surrey was well served by racecourses and the first ideas of reaching Epsom Racecourse came in 1838. Trains were planned on race days and passengers were set down on the Kingston to Epsom line. They then had to journey the last 6 miles on foot or by car or trap. It was clear that a station nearby was required and one was opened on 22 May 1865 just in time for Derby Day.

Woodside station, close to Croydon Racecourse, was opened in 1871. Horses were often brought to the racecourse by train and for a number of years a track to the course from the down side of the station catered for many famous horses. Gatwick Racecourse station on the main London to Brighton line opened in 1891 and to cater for the anticipated traffic, a relief line was opened from Gatwick Racecourse to Horley in October 1892. Meanwhile, Kempton Park racecourse had proposed a station in 1877 but this was rejected. One was built in 1878 with them paying half the costs themselves.

The last of the Surrey racecourse stations to be built takes us back to Epsom. Tattenham Corner station opened in July 1901 and handled around 15,000 passengers. Many came from London but a large number arrived from the coast or through Reading. The punters were taken right to the racecourse itself. In addition to this a raised lawn close to the station gave excellent views over much of the Downs.

And so, from an absence of railways at the beginning of Victoria's reign, a complex network had been created across the county to support trade, 'commuter traffic' to London and provide leisure opportunities for the population of London and the surrounding counties - a legacy which is still with us.

## Sall Baring

### *Acknowledgements*

- Map of Victorian railways across Surrey, courtesy of Surrey Industrial History Group
- Photo of train - probably East Clandon Common Bridge over Ripley Road, courtesy of Surrey History Centre

## Surrey - a county of rural peasants?

Today, Surrey is perceived as being one of the wealthiest counties in the country and it is difficult for many of the current generation to appreciate that this is a modern phenomenon. If we look back to the early 19th century, rural Surrey was predominantly a peasant population. Yes, as you can read elsewhere, there were wealthy land owners but these were the exceptions who held considerable power over the labourers who worked their land.

Reading the literature you will find little mention of Surrey as an agricultural county - mainly because its produce was insignificant compared to the larger, more productive counties elsewhere. However, the majority of the rural population here was involved in some way with agriculture and its associated trades.

A typical labourer would work for a farmer - who might himself be a tenant of a wealthy landowner. The labourer would generally rent his accommodation from the farmer and in most cases, tenancy went with the job. If he lost his job he tended to lose his home as well. In addition, if he were ill or had an accident so that he couldn't work, he got no pay - so would struggle to pay his rent. Thus, all the power was with the farmer and the labourer was close to being tied to him. This meant that farmers could pay very low wages whilst ensuring the labourers worked extremely long hours. In general, the entire family, including very young children, had to work in order to obtain even a subsistence living. As late as 1867, labourer's weekly wages varied from 12 shillings (60p) in western Surrey, to 15 shillings (75p) in the neighbourhood of London.



As stated at the time by a West Country parson, Canon Girdlestone, "How is it possible. on such wretched wages for a man to house, to feed and clothe not only himself but his wife and children; and to pay, in addition, the doctor and the midwife when their services were required; to provide shoes, fuel, light, such incidental expenses as school fees, and, in fact, many other items which cannot be enumerated, but which entered nevertheless into the cost of living."



Although William Cobbett (a Farnham local) died just before Victoria's coronation, he had spent many years trying to raise the issues of peasant conditions and pay. He was a thorn in the side of Government and authority but did much to highlight the iniquities of early 19th century farm labour. Frederick E Green and George Sturt were two other local writers who wrote extensively on this topic. They were both born in the 1860s and possibly gained a broader perspective on rural poverty since they were looking back over their lives which included the latter part of the century.



One of Sturt's propositions was that the local peasantry had once been less poor and more self-sufficient and that the "enclosures" which occurred during the earlier part of the century had been a major cause of their decline. The peasants lost the land over which their cow, donkey, geese, fowls, or swine used to graze, and from which they derived fuel for the household, fodder for their beasts, and even corn for their daily bread. Thus, they only had their labour to provide for all their needs and, additionally, now had to purchase from that minimal amount all of those products which they could have obtained free prior to enclosure.

The situation towards the end of the century was exacerbated by general agricultural depression - partly driven by greater international trade in produce. The agricultural labour situation became unsustainable and many left the land to seek employment in towns. This depressed wages for unskilled labour and together with a doubling in population in the first 70 years of the century led to a complete rebalancing of rural versus urban employment. To highlight the change, in 1872 Surrey had 193,343 acres of arable land but by 1909 this had fallen 47% to 102,364 acres.



Some Victorians, however, did make good. Self-made entrepreneurs used their new wealth to rise in society, building large houses, educating their children and employing domestic servants (by the 1880s, 1.25 million people were employed in domestic service - more than in any other work category). That, I suspect was the origin of the current "wealthy Surrey" image. Having created their wealth in the urban areas, they then wanted to move out to greener, cleaner, more beautiful environments. And the rest, as they say, is history.

**Ken Bare**

### ***Acknowledgements***

- Deerleap Woods Wotton. Hoopshaver at his hut
- Milton Farm, Westcott
- Moving Barn @ Bookham

All 3 images courtesy of Keith Harding, Walter Rose/[goodnessgracious.co.uk](http://goodnessgracious.co.uk)